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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet describes seminars conducted by of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to expand teachers' knowledge at all levels in order to expand students' knowledge. The seminars include: teaching with technology; forging local partnerships; work outside the classroom; lifelong learning exhibitions; the civil war; castle, cathedral, pyramid, and Roman city; museum-school partnerships; and expanding learning through television. (EH)

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what learning means

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

If a nation expects
to be ignorant and
free, in a state of
civilization, it expects
what never was and
never will be.
— Thomas Jefferson

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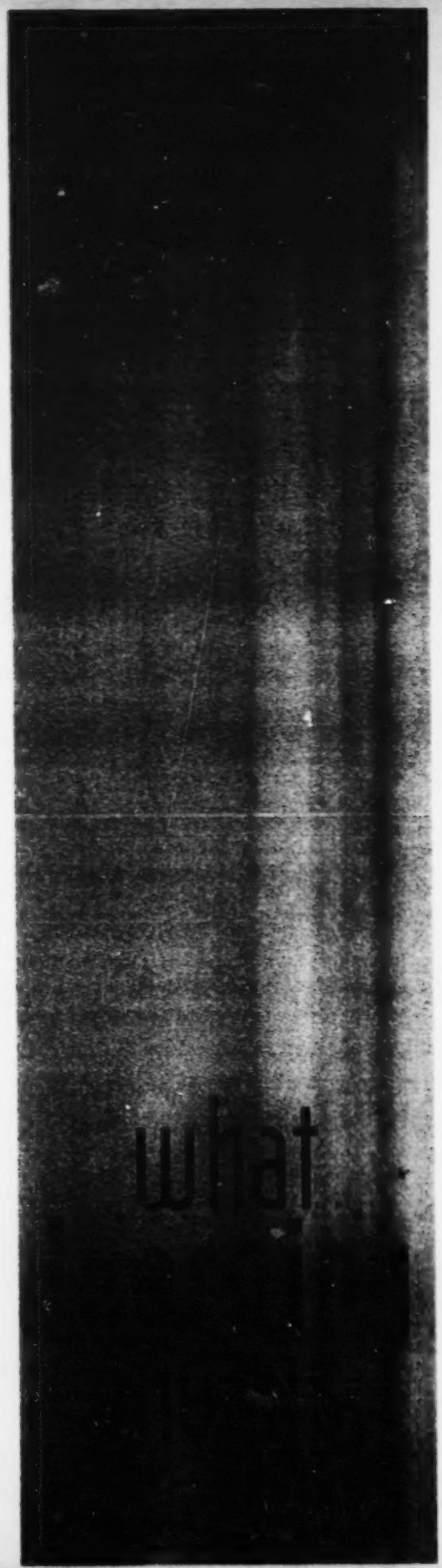

Teachers can only impart knowledge that they themselves possess. More than 2,000 schoolteachers and 1,000 college teachers are involved each year in intensive NEH-sponsored humanities seminars, enriching the classroom experience for more than 500,000 students each year following the seminar.

The seminars offer teachers the opportunity to study with outstanding scholars who happen to teach in a university in another state, as well as the stimulation of working with teachers from other states who can bring very different experiences to the seminar. Over the years, more than 20,000 schoolteachers and nearly 30,000 college teachers have benefited.

TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY

Computing and communications technology are beginning to transform ways of teaching. NEH is supporting the development of new software and compact discs, as well as several electronic database projects, for making a wealth of research resources available.

Among the projects:

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology has developed an interactive videodisc for learning about Spanish language and culture. Working with a video and computer screen, the student follows an adventure in Bogota, Columbia, conversing with fictional characters played by native-speaking actors. Computerized instant replay, reference, and glossary functions make the foreign language speech patterns intelligible to intermediate level students.

- MIT is also is preparing a compact disc of Shakespeare's plays that allows students to see film versions as they read a given passage; *Hamlet* offers side-by-side interpretations of Olivier and the later Zeffirelli.

- Students of the classics can now access the entire body of ancient Greek literature through the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, available on a single compact disc.

- Columbia University is using state-of-the-art computer graphics to create a CD-ROM virtual reality model of Amiens cathedral; the multimedia experience will allow the student to "walk through" an architectural and cultural monument of Western tradition, stopping at any point to seek more detail.

FORGING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Endowment supports study programs that teachers can attend during the school year in the communities where they live. In a number of instances, NEH seed money has helped establish permanent programs for teachers, run collaboratively by the schools and nearby colleges and universities. As a result of recent grants:

- Ohio State University conducted a course to allow high school teachers of Russian to upgrade their listening and speaking skills in their own homes by studying recordings of Russian films and television broadcasts, and then conversing in Russian with a language tutor via telephone.
- Faculty members from five regional community colleges, assisted by nationally known scholars, met regularly for a year at the University of Central Florida in Orlando to discuss Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the Renaissance mind. The participants teach 3,000 students annually at the only public higher education institution in this booming area.

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

One of the goals of the National Endowment for the Humanities is to provide access to lifelong learning for all Americans. In its 31 years, the NEH has taken the lead in encouraging American cultural institutions — libraries, museums, historic houses, and television and radio stations — to consider themselves part of a network of learning centers. And it has worked.

- Three million Americans have taken part in the NEH-sponsored reading and discussion programs at libraries in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands over the last sixteen years. In a typical year, 250,000 Americans participated in programs that took place in nearly 384 libraries across the nation.

LIFELONG LEARNING

From museum exhibitions on Thomas Edison, to the Library of America, to the celebrated film series on *The Civil War*, NEH commits itself to a lifetime of learning.

THE CIVIL WAR

The successful documentary film series, *The Civil War*, became a learning tool in classrooms in the fall of 1990. In order to encourage discussion of questions such as loyalty to nation, slavery, and other issues, the Endowment in collaboration with General Motors supported the development of materials for school use.

These educational packets — consisting of poster, leaflets for students on various issues, and a teacher's manual containing suggested discussion questions, activities, and research projects —were distributed to 17,000 junior and senior high schools. The materials included photographs, key quotations, and a selected bibliography. In addition, more than 150,000 sets of videotapes of the series itself were distributed as educational materials, making the documentary a powerful text for classroom use.

CASTLE, CATHEDRAL, PYRAMID, & ROMAN CITY

Families throughout the country have been drawn to the NEH-funded documentary television series based on the work of illustrator David Macaulay. Using a blend of animated dramatic sequences and live action, Macaulay tells the stories of the planning, construction, and cultural significance of the *Castle*, *Cathedral*, *Pyramid*, and *Roman City*. More than 100,000 tapes have been sold for home video distribution; about 15,000 curriculum kits have been sold to schools.

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MUSEUM-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

While "The Royal Tombs of Sipan" exhibition drew visitors by the thousands at stops in Los Angeles, Houston, and New York, the significance went far beyond the numbers.

The exhibition itself became a place of learning and discovery where families could learn together about how archaeologists found and deciphered the clues to understanding this ancient pre-Inca civilization.

In setting up the exhibition, the Fowler Museum of Cultural History at UCLA made a point of building bridges from the museum into the classroom. It reserved the museum's morning hours entirely for school audiences and developed an extensive series of teacher programs and curriculum materials. The materials include slides, lesson plans, an exhibition overview, and copies of a special exhibition-related issue of *Faces*, a national magazine on anthropology for young people.

During the run in L.A., more than 160 schools, involving 12,000 students of all grade levels, visited the "Royal Tombs of Sipan." As one teacher wrote, "The most exciting and worthwhile experience, probably the best in thirty years of teaching . . .This in-depth preparation paid off . . . for three weeks we persevered, the students taking on my enthusiasm. . . . By the time of the visits, you would have thought they were going to Magic Mountain."

- One million Americans, many of them far from urban universities, have heard the nation's finest poetry via cassette in "Voices and Visions," supported by NEH; as a telecourse, it reaches 200 colleges, 2,000 high schools, and 500 public libraries.
- Children and adults alike learn from historical figures come to life as scholars portray people such as Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis in chautauquas and living history presentations seen by more than 250,000 people in 21 states last year.
- 1.8 million people learned about the effects of Columbus's crossing in "Seeds of Change," an educational exhibition which visited libraries in 58 cities.

EXPANDING LEARNING THROUGH TELEVISION

Americans as a nation are enchanted by the possibilities of television. As the statistics tell us, more hours are spent in front of the television screen than in the classroom by the time the average teenager graduates from high school. Carefully crafted television and radio programs in the humanities are stimulating interest in history, literature, and other disciplines.

- Film series such as *The Adams Chronicles* bring the founding days of the nation to life; the deepest divisions are portrayed as well, as in the acclaimed Ken Burns series *The Civil War*, which drew an audience of 38 million viewers, and the biography of slave-turned-editor Frederick Douglass, *When the Lion Wrote History*. For the Douglass film, teachers' guides were distributed to 35,000 teachers and 2,000 schools, with funding from the Kodak Corporation supplementing the NEH grant.
- The lives of presidents have been instructive as well, with film biographies such as *Eisenhower*, *FDR*, *TR*, and *LBJ*.

A "SEAL OF APPROVAL"

NEH works as a federal-state and public-private partnership. Its national merit-review process, drawing upon panelists from across the country and pitting every proposal against the best proposals from all over the nation, gives the impulse toward excellence that national competition provides. Corporations, foundations, and philanthropists frequently depend on NEH judgments about quality in awarding their own financial support.

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"PARENTS AS TEACHERS OF THE HUMANITIES"

The Crusade Against Crime, a nonprofit community organization in St. Louis, is working with the St. Louis Public Library and the St. Louis Public Schools on workshops to instruct parents or guardians in reading and analyzing children's literature.

Through this program, parents will gain strategies for conveying to their children an understanding and appreciation of the wonders of good stories in addition to uncovering, for example, the ethical and moral choices that characters in them face.

As one of the panelists who reviewed this proposal wrote: "This project takes aim at a serious kind of poverty in America — cultural impoverishment."

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